



A Printed Muslim ‘Lighthouse’ in Cairo *al-Manār*’s Early Years, Religious Aspiration and Reception (1898-1903)

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Abstract

On the basis of fresh documents the article tried to reconstruct a historical description of the establishment of the most well-known reformist magazine *al-Manār*. The personal papers of its founder Muḥammad Rašīd Riḍā uncover new information about the background of his journalistic plans and religious aspirations after his arrival in Egypt in 1897. The paper reconsiders Riḍā’s early religious formation and apprenticeship in his homeland Syria; his position in the printing press in Egypt; the early funding of his magazine; his early integration in the Egyptian life; the early circulation of *al-Manār*; and his perspectives on the craft of printing in serving religious sciences.

Keywords

Printing, Egypt, Syrians, Islamic reformism, *al-Manār*, Rašīd Riḍā

Printing technology had its first impact on the religious world of Islam in the second half of the 19th century. The Islamic tradition was thus integrated into the new cultural production. The world of manuscripts started gradually to be on the wane. Manuscripts were no longer skillfully copied on demand as they were in the past. Printed books drastically replaced the manuscript tradition; and the non-printed tradition was withdrawn from the public. The

¹ I am greatly indebted to Mr. Fu’ād Riḍā, the grandson of Sheikh Rašīd Riḍā, for giving me his confidence to regularly visit his place in Cairo and use their family archive. My thank is due to Prof. Dr. P. S. van Koningsveld and Prof. Dr. G. A. Wiegers, the supervisors of my PhD thesis [*Islamic Reformism and Christianity: A Critical Reading of the works of Muhammad Rashid Rida and his associates (1898-1935)*, University of Leiden, June 2008], for their guiding remarks. My Gratitude is also due to the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO) for the financial grant for research in Egypt. The first draft of this article has been presented at the conference: *Sacred Texts and Print Culture—The Case of Qur’ān and Bible of the Orthodox Churches during the 18th and 19th Century*, Central European University, Budapest (2-4 December 2005). I should not forget Nadia al-Baghdadi and Aziz al-Azmeh for their generosity as organizers of the conference in Budapest.

printing press also participated into creating a new reading public, and reading became no longer a specialized activity limited to manuscripts.²

The lines of religious authority within Islam had been mostly shaped by personal links between masters and their disciples. The traditional method of preserving, refining, and transmitting thoughts was competed by writers, editors, and publishers even with no formal religious education. Putting their words into print was a new platform for disseminating ideas. The introduction of printing into the Arab East had also tremendous impact upon the role of the press. Journals and newspapers became the most common medium through which most Arab intellectuals were able to disseminate their political ideas and cultural and religious concepts. The genesis and massive distribution of renowned literary-scientific Arabic journals was the basis of the later intellectual, political, and social conditions for modernity in the Arab world.³

The then almost 32-year-old Syro-Egyptian Muslim publicist and scholar Muḥammad Rašid Riḍā (1865-1935) left his birthplace Tripoli in Syria for Egypt in 1897, and the next year he published the first issue of his journal *al-Manār* (The Lighthouse), the name which he later exploited for his own printing house in Cairo. Islamic journalism experienced its earliest zenith in Egypt with the publication of Riḍā's journal, as the early leading *salafi* scholar in the Muslim world. From the time of its foundation, *al-Manār* became Riḍā's life in which he published his reflections on the spiritual life, explanation of Islamic doctrine, endless polemics, commentary on the Qur'ān, *fatwā*-s, his thoughts on world politics, etc.⁴ Through his journal, Riḍā also claimed himself to be the organ and disseminator of the reformist ideas of his teacher and the then mufti of Egypt Muḥammad 'Abduh (d. 1905).⁵

² See, Reinhard Schulze, "Mass Culture and Islamic Cultural Production in the 19th Century Middle East", *Mass Culture, Popular Culture and Social Life in the Middle East*, Georg Stauth & al. (ed.), Frankfurt am Main, Campus Verlag, 1987, p. 189-207; Francis Robinson, "Technology and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print", *Modern Asian Studies*, 27/1 (1993), p. 229-251.

³ Stephen Sheehi, "Arabic Literary-Scientific Journals: Precedence for Globalization and the Creation of Modernity", *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 25/2 (2005); electronic version is available at: http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/comparative_studies_of_south_asia_africa_and_the_middle_east/toc/cst25.2.html (accessed on 15 November 2005).

⁴ Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age: 1789-1939*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 226-227.

⁵ More about him and his relation to Riḍā, see, for example, Malcolm H. Kerr, *Islamic Reform: The Political and Legal Theories of Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1966; A. N. Busool, "Muhammad R. Riḍā and Relations with Jamāl A. Alafghāni and Muhammad Abduh", *The Muslim World*, 66/4 (1976), p. 272-286; N. A. Khoury and A. I. Baaklini, "Muhammad Abduh: Ideology of Development," *The Muslim World*, 69/1 (1979), p. 42-52.

Al-Manār was the print medium which has given 'Abduh's reformist exegesis of the Qur'ān its largest publicity among many readers all over the world. This exegesis saw light for the first time as series lectures given by 'Abduh at Al-Azhar University. Riḍā, up to 'Abduh's death in 1905, used to rework the materials and publish them in his journal after the approval of its author. Later Riḍā carried on the project till his death in 1935. His editing and printing of 'Abduh's commentary on the Sacred Text of Islam and reflections on numerous theological and legal issues added to his journal more religious authority and reputation.⁶

As a print scholar and mufti, he was able to reach readers from all corners of the world through his voluminous and community-building works; and to take a highly prominent position in the modern Muslim intellectual life at the late 19th and the early 20th centuries.⁷ Throughout his whole printing and scholastic career for more than three decennia, Riḍā also succeeded to gather around his journal a great network of Muslim writers; and extended the influence of his religious ideas over the Muslim World from North Africa to Russia and the Far East.⁸

Riḍā's place as a Muslim journalist has been studied in Ami Ayalon's work on the history of press in the Arab Middle East. He mentions that Riḍā's aim was to join the intellectual debate over the issue of Islamic society's cultural and political orientation.⁹ Riḍā, though a devout 'ālim, whose paper became the voice of conservative Islam for nearly four decades, was sufficiently forward-looking to employ the new medium in order to confront secularist

⁶ See, M. H. Kerr, "Rashid Rida and Islamic Legal Reform: an Ideological Analysis", *The Muslim World*, 50 (1960), p. 99-108 and 170-181; *id.*, *Islamic Reform...*; J. Jomier, *Le commentaire coranique du Manār*, Paris, 1954; *id.*, "La raison et l'histoire dans le commentaire du Manār", *MIDEO*, 19 (1989), p. 17-47; *id.*, "Les raisons de l'adhésion du Sayyid Rashid Rida au nationalisme arabe", *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte*, 53-54 (1971-3), p. 53-61.

⁷ Muhammad Khalid Masud & *al.*, (eds.), *Islamic legal Interpretation: Muftis and Their Fatwas*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1996, p. 30-31.

⁸ See, for example, Mona Abaza. "Southeast Asia and the Middle East: *al-Manār* and Islamic Modernity", *Mediterranean to the Chinese Sea: Miscellaneous Notes*, Claude Guillot, Denys Lombard and Roderich Ptak (eds.), Wiesbaden, Harrasowitz, 1998, p. 93-111; Azyumardi Azra, "The Transmission of *al-Manār*'s Reformism to the Malay-Indonesian World: the Cases of *al-Imam* and *al-Munir*", *Studia Islamica*, 6/3 (1999), p. 79-111; Jutta E. Bluhm, "A Preliminary Statement on the Dialogue Established Between the Reform Magazine *al-Manār* and the Malay-Indonesian World", *Indonesia Circle*, 32 (1983), p. 35-42; *id.*, "*al-Manār* and Ahmad Soorkartie: Links in the Chain of Transmission of Muhammad 'Abduh's Ideas to the Malay-Speaking World", *Islam: Essays on Scripture, Thought and Society*, Peter G. Riddell and Tony Street (eds.), Leiden, Brill, 1997, p. 295-308.

⁹ Ami Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East: A History*, New York-Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 54 and 134-198.

influences and disseminate his own principles.¹⁰ Skovgaard-Petersen described Riḍā as one of the early prominent Muslim scholars who exploited journalism in promoting religious values among his Muslim public. Before the appearance of his journal and by the end of the century, however, the Islamic press arose in Egypt, and a dozen of “conservative” religious newspapers and journals were established. They had names like “Islam”, or “Justice” or “The Straight Path”.¹¹ Dyala Hamzah, on the other hand, tried to deconstruct Riḍā’s reputation as *‘ālim* or *muṣliḥ* (reformer). She argued that “when read as a *‘ālim*, producing a theoretical work, in the framework of a time-honoured methodology, Riḍā is bound to appear incoherent, non-systematic, inconsistent; when read as a *journalist*, i.e., as a writer tuned first to his times, then his work appears as it really is: the chronicle of a world in tremendous turmoil, dictated by events and written by an author in the process of shaping his craft and in the process of being shaped by it.”¹²

Departing from the conference’s very question of “authority, and of identifying the places of print and printing authorities and their social and cultural embeddedness”, the paper will specifically focus on the early institutional background of *al-Manār* in the light of Riḍā’s journal and some of his remaining personal papers and documents in possession of his family in Egypt. The family archive contains Riḍā’s correspondences, diaries, and many other documents. To understand the close social setting of the journal, we shall attempt to answer the following questions: how was his early relation to the Egyptian cultural sphere in the early years? Which places did he visit and what were the major activities and organizations in which he was involved in order to promote his career and authority as a religious scholar? How did he secure the early funding for his journal? What was the scope of his journal’s circulation in the initial phase of its publication? How did Riḍā understand the

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

¹¹ Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen, *Defining Islam for the Egyptian State: Muftis and Fatwas of Dar al-Ifṭā*, Leiden–New York–Cologne, Brill, 1997, p. 55-56.

¹² For more about this ‘deconstruction’ theory, see, D. Hamzah, “La pensée de ‘Abduh à l’âge utilitaire : l’intérêt général entre *maṣlaḥa* et *maṣḥū’a*”, M. Charif et S. Mervin (eds), *Moderinités islamiques*, actes du colloque d’Alep à l’occasion du centenaire de la disparition de l’imam Muḥammad ‘Abduh, 9-10 novembre 2005, IFPO, Damascus, 2006, p. 31, the above-mentioned citation is taken from her unpublished paper, “Rašīd Riḍā: ‘Ālim, Islamic reformer or Journalist? Genre, Class and the Intellectual Craft during the Nahḍa”, unpublished paper presented to the Fourth Mediterranean Social and Political Research meeting, Florence 19-23 March 2003, p. 3. Hamzah is preparing for her PhD dissertation: *L’intérêt général (maṣlaḥa ‘amma) ou le triomphe de l’opinion : Fondation délibératoire (et esquisses délibératives) dans les écrits du publiciste syro-égyptien Muḥammad Rašīd Riḍā (1865-1935)*, at the Freie Universität, Berlin and EHES, Paris. My gratitude is due to the author for allowing me to use her works.

issue of printing in the Arab world and the impact of the printed press as a medium for disseminating his theological and pedagogical aspirations?

Printing Press in Egypt

In his account of the Egyptian press in 1899, the German orientalist Martin Hartmann (1851-1918) observed that "literary work *was* daily on the increase. New printing-offices, new books, new periodicals, and new men follow one another with a rapidity that is surprising in an oriental country. As a natural consequence, the former condition of printing and publishing will soon be forgotten."¹³

Syrian immigrants in particular played a major social, economic and cultural role in the Egyptian society. The first wave of Syrian emigration occurred roughly between 1730 and 1780.¹⁴ In the second half of the 19th century Syrian immigration to the country increasingly resumed. Besides the economic and educational motives for immigration, political repression under the 'Abdulḥamidian regime during the two decades before World War I was a major reason that some educated and politicized young Syrians ran afoul of the Ottoman secret police.¹⁵ Towards the end of the 19th century, three major socio-occupational groups among the Syrians settled in Egypt. Firstly, professionals, among whom journalists, editors and owners of periodicals were dominant, followed by employees in the various branches of the government administration. Secondly, the commercial class, which included businessmen, agents of foreign companies and contractors of development projects. Thirdly, artisans, manual labors and the poor.¹⁶ The cultural contributions and political ideas of the 'Syrian intelligentsia' in Egypt were much connected with the press.¹⁷

¹³ Martin Hartmann, *The Arabic Press of Egypt*, London, Luzac & Co, 1899, p. I.

¹⁴ Thomas Philipp, *The Syrians in Egypt 1725-1975*, Stuttgart, Franz Steiner Verlag, 1985, p. 1-53; see also, Albert Hourani, "Lebanese and Syrians in Egypt", Albert Hourani and Nadim Shehadi (eds.), *The Lebanese in the World: A Century of Emigration*, London, I.B. Tauris, 1992, p. 497-508.

¹⁵ Philipp, *The Syrians...*, p. 85-87. About the printing and cultural activities in the Ottoman Empire, see, Johann Strauss, "Who Read What in the Ottoman Empire (19th-20th Centuries)", *Arabic and Middle Eastern Literatures*, 6/1 (2003), p. 39-67; cf. Caesar Farah, "Censorship and Freedom of Expression in Ottoman Syria and Egypt", William W. Haddad and William Ochsenwald (eds.), *Nationalism in a non-National State*, Colombus, Ohio State University Press, 1977, p. 151-194.

¹⁶ Philipp, *The Syrians...*, p. 96.

¹⁷ Philipp, *The Syrians...*, p. 96-117. Cf. A. Hourani, "The Syrians in Egypt in the eighteenth and nineteenth century", *Colloque international sur l'histoire du Caire*, Cairo, 1972; S. S'lim.

The press in Beirut and Syria became increasingly restricted by Ottoman censorship, while the center of journalistic and intellectual activity shifted to Egypt. Syrian immigrants made the biggest contribution in creating Egyptian journalism, and even for a while monopolized it. Between 1800 and 1914 a total of 790 newspapers and journals were founded in the country. Of these 150 (roughly one fifth) were “owned by men whose names were recognizably Syrians”.¹⁸

Another statistics shows that from 1873-1907, 648 periodicals appeared on the market and 97 of them (some 15%) were started by Syrians.¹⁹ Another statistics indicates a more modest figure of 169 newspapers and journals established by 1898; and the number increased to 282 by 1913.²⁰

Due to the fact that Syrian Christians largely maintained the Egyptian press, Islamic matters were of secondary importance. Skovgaard-Petersen argued that some of these existent newspapers would deal with Islam in a new manner, dispassionately, objectively referring to events and statements without necessarily passing judgment upon them.²¹ Most of those Syrian journals were run by a group of intellectuals who were mostly educated in western literary traditions in their country of origin before migration to Egypt. They mostly had showed a rather secularist tendency in dealing with religious, political, and social problems in their writings. Among the prominent names were: *al-Hilāl* (The Crescent) of Ğurġī Zaydān (1861-1914), *al-Muqtaṭaf* (The Selected) of Ya‘qūb Ṣarrūf (1852-1927) and Fāris Nimr (1856-1951), *al-Ġāmī‘a* (Universalism) of Faraḥ Anṭūn (1874-1922), etc.

Riḍā's Years in Syria

Biographical information on Riḍā is mostly taken from his autobiography, which he primarily published more than thirty years after his migration to Egypt during his polemical debate against the anti-*salafī* Azharī scholar Yūsuf al-Diġwī (1870-1946), a member of the Corps of Al-Azhar's High ‘ulamā’, around the understanding and interpretation of a variety of Islamic themes.²² His famous biography of Muḥammad ‘Abduh: *Tārīḥ al-ustād al-imām* is also

The Position of the Syro-Egyptian Newspapers Towards British Administration 1892-1907, MA thesis, Beirut, n.d.

¹⁸ Hourani, *Arabic Thought...*, p. 229; as quoted in Philipp, *The Syrians...*, p. 98.

¹⁹ Philipp, *The Syrians...*, p. 97.

²⁰ Omar Imady, *Journals, associations and political parties: the institutions of Islamic reform (1871-1949)*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1993, p. 65.

²¹ Skovgaard-Petersen, *Defining Islam...*, p. 55.

²² R. Riḍā, *al-Manār wa-l-Azhar*, Cairo, al-Manār, 1934.

marked as one of the important sources for his life. By writing this work, Riḍā not only “wrote the history of his Sheikh, [but also] what he did as though he were writing his own history as well.”²³

Born in Al-Qalamūn, a village near Tripoli, in 1865, Riḍā belonged to a religious Sunni family claiming its kinship to the descendants of the Prophet. In his young years, he was deeply involved into the Naqṣbandī Sufi order. In the circle of Sheikh Maḥmūd Naṣṣāba of Tripoli (1813-1890),²⁴ Riḍā read the *ḥadīṭ* collection of *al-Arbāʾin al-nawawīyya*, and got his *iğāza* (diploma) in the field of Prophetic Traditions. The well-known Muslim scholar Sheikh Ḥusayn al-Ġisr (1845-1909), the founder of the National Islamic School of Tripoli extended to him another *iğāza* certifying him to teach and transmit religious knowledge (see appendix). In al-Ġisr's school, emphasis was laid upon the combination between religious education and modern sciences, especially mathematics, natural sciences, French, alongside Arabic and Turkish.²⁵ In the meantime, Riḍā's uncle, Muḥammad Kāmil ibn Muḥammad (1843-1939), taught him Arabic, and had impact on his religious knowledge.²⁶

Riḍā's fascination with the role of the press for the religious reform movement started when he by chance came across among his father's papers some issues of the short-lived *al-ʿUrwa l-wuṭqā* (The Firmest Bond), co-published by Ġamāl al-Dīn al-Afġānī (1839-1897)²⁷ and ʿAbduh during their exile in Paris. In his own words: “All I wanted to do before I read *al-ʿUrwa l-wuṭqā* was to teach the tenets of Islam and the transitory nature of life on earth. Now I saw a new light: to work for the unification of the Muslim world. My duty, I now knew, lay in guiding the faithful to the ways of progress and modern civilization.”²⁸ Ayalon stressed impact of “collective reading” on the

²³ Ṭāhir al-Ṭanāḥī. *Muḍakkirāt al-Imām Muḥammad ʿAbduh*, Cairo, Dār al-Hilāl, 1961; as quoted in Elizabeth Sirriyeh. “Raṣīd Riḍā's Autobiography of the Syrian Years, 1865-1897”, *Arabic and Middle Eastern Literatures*, 3/2 (2000), p. 184.

²⁴ See, al-Ziriklī, *al-A'lām*, Beirut, Dār al-ilm li-l-malāyīn, 2002, VII, p. 185-86.

²⁵ Sirriyeh, “Autobiography...”, p. 184.

²⁶ Anīs al-Abyaḍ, *al-Ḥayāt al-ʿilmiyya wa-marākiz al-ʿilm fī Ṭarābulus ḥilāl al-qarn al-tāsiʿ ʿaṣar*, Tripoli, 1985, p. 97.

²⁷ About him, see, for example, Nikki R. Keddie, *Sayyid Jamal ad-Din “al-Afghani”: A Political Biography*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1972; *id.*, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal al-Din “al-Afghani”*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1983; Elie Kedourie, *Afghani and ʿAbduh: An Essay on Religious Unbelief and Political Activism in Modern Islam*, London, 1966; Albert Qudsi-Zadah, *Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani: An Annotated Bibliography*, Leiden, Brill, 1970; Mazheruddin Siddiqi, *Modern Reformist Thought in the Muslim World*, Islamabad, Islamic Research Institute, 1982; W. Cantwell Smith, *Islam in Modern History*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1957.

²⁸ *Tārīḥ*, I, p. 84; as translated by Jamal M. Ahmed, *The Intellectual Origin of Egyptian Nationalism*, London, Oxford University Press, 1960, p. 29. It is also cited by Hamzah, “ʿAlim...”, p. 13.

accessibility of journals, such as *al-‘Urwa l-wuṭqā*. Describing Riḍā as ‘thinker and journalist’, he relates the story that Riḍā first became acquainted with the journal—while listening to articles read aloud from it by the Egyptian political refugees in his hometown. Citing the *Tārīḥ*, he translates: “The famous Sheikh Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Ġawād al-Qāyātī took [the paper] held one of those olive oil lamps in his hands, and began to read in an accentuated tone, as if he were a preacher. He paused every few sentences to give vent to the profound emotions which possessed him, and did not leave the paper until he reached the end.”²⁹ The journal began to have its full impact on Riḍā’s thoughts by 1892-1893, in what he described as “an electric current passing through his body.”³⁰

The craft of printing was modest in the Tripoli of Riḍā’s time. In 1889, the Syrian journalist Muḥammad Kāmil al-Buḥayrī (d. 1917) established the al-Balāġa Press, where his town-fellows were able to have their works published in various available languages. He also founded his journal *Ṭarābulus* (Tripoli) in 1893. Before the foundation of Buḥayrī’s printing house, authors of Tripoli used to have their publications printed in Beirut, Turkey or Egypt. However, Buḥayrī’s printing house made scholarly works written by other local ‘*ulamā*’ available for students in the region.³¹

In his village Riḍā started his preaching career, and took the central mosque as a place for teaching religious sciences to the people of his village, especially *tafsīr* lessons.³² In his autobiography, he also mentioned that he regularly went to cafes to give sermons to Muslims, who were not habitual visitors of the mosque. He also gathered women in a room inside his house, where he instructed them about the rules of rituals and worship matters.³³

Riḍā was drawn into the world of journalism when he was still in Tripoli. His master al-Ġisr was one of the early people who introduced him to journalist circles in the town, where he wrote several articles in several journals. In the preceding years before his move to Cairo, he was offered the editorship of the journal *Ṭamarāt al-funūn* (Fruits of the Arts, founded in 1876) of the Syrian journalist ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Qabbānī (1848-1935).³⁴ Ayalon maintained that Riḍā was a ‘victim’ of censorship prior to his emigration to Egypt. Riḍā, according to him, also tried to get a license to start his own journal in

²⁹ Ayalon, *The Press*..., p. 156-157.

³⁰ Sirriyeh, “Autobiography...”, p. 187.

³¹ Al-Abyad, *al-Hayāt*..., p. 45-46.

³² Al-Abyad, *al-Hayāt*..., p. 258.

³³ *Al-Manār wa-l-Azhar*, p. 171-179.

³⁴ Hamzah, “‘*Ālim*...”, p. 7. For the journal’s history, see Donald Ciota, *Thamarat al-Funun: Syria’s First Islamic Newspaper, 1875–1908*, PhD Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1979.

Tripoli. He completed the necessary application procedure with the local authority and, having been notified of his eligibility for a license, paid the required security, whereupon his application was forward to the vali of Beirut for approval. The vali denied his request, "for there already exists one newspaper in Tripoli, and if a second one were to be established the burden on the censor would be heavy."³⁵ Ayalon is mistaken in his reading of Riḍā's statements. In that quoted article, Riḍā did not refer to his own initiative, but to the manager of *al-Manār* (discussed below), who failed to get a license to a journal in their birthplace.³⁶ Riḍā's ultimate goal of migrating to Egypt was, however, to initiate a private journalistic project in Cairo.³⁷

Al-Manār's Early Funding

Concerning *al-Manār's* early funding, previous researchers mostly depend on Riḍā's own story, which he published in his biography on 'Abduh: that he initially started the project as dependent on his own savings and, subsequently later on his subscribers. According to Riḍā, the only occasion of external funding involves a loan from one of 'Abduh's associates, which Riḍā obtained in 1901 after *Manār's* administrative office was burglarized.³⁸ On the other hand, Russian and German diplomatic sources reported that Sultan Abdülhamîd was upset by the Egyptian Khedive 'Abbās Ḥilmî for allegedly sponsoring *al-Manār*.³⁹

Among Riḍā's papers, however, I found an agreement, which he set up a few months before his migration to Egypt with a certain 'Abd al-Ḥalîm b. 'Ubayd Afandî Murâd al-Ṭarâbulî, one of his acquaintances and fellow citizens in Tripoli (see appendix). According to the contract, both parties agreed to start a joint print-enterprise in Egypt, and to establish a "scientific, political and literary" journal as well. The name *al-Manār* was not mentioned in the agreement yet. It was settled in Tripoli-Syria in Rabî' al-awwal 1315/ September 1897, and contained seventeen articles.

³⁵ Ayalon, *The Press...*, p. 114.

³⁶ The paper was under the name of "al-Fayḥā", *al-Manār*, I/34, p. 660.

³⁷ *Al-Manār wa-l-Azhar*, p. 192.

³⁸ Imady, *Journals...*, p. 108-109.

³⁹ L. Hirsowicz, "The Sultan and the Khedive, 1892-1908", *Middle Eastern Studies*, 8 (1972), p. 229; as cited in David Commins, "*al-Manār* and Popular Religion in Syria, 1898-1920", *Intellectuals in the Modern Islamic World: Transmission, transformation, and communication*, Stephane A. Dudoignon, Komatsu Hisao, and Kosugi Yasushi (ed.), London, Routledge Press, 2006, pp. 40-54.

As both parties had the privilege and full right of the journal, each of them had a copy of the contract. Riḍā was entrusted with all matters of writing, editing and correction of the journal, but Murād was assigned all administrative matters, such as the management and correspondence with agents and employees, and the supervision of printing matters. If the editor (Riḍā) needed an assistant or a translator, or the manager needed an accountant, their salaries should be paid by the journal, and not by either of the two persons; whether it was on a provisional (such as in case of illness or travel) or permanent (such as in the case of plenty of work) basis. Neither of the two partners had the right to be independent in associating any other person or appointing agents or employees or giving them payments without the permission of the other person. Murād was committed to pay all the costs of the journal and other printed materials until the profit would become enough, and then he would have the right to retrieve his assets, which are his own capital. There should be annual accounting between the two partners, and the profit should be divided between both of them after excluding all costs made by either of them. All the profits of printed books, treatises and any other publications should be shared between the two persons; whether they were earned before or after buying the printing house, whether their funds were paid by both parties or one of them individually. When Riḍā gifted one of his printed works to any of the *‘uḏamā’* (great men), and received a financial reward or any other presents in return, Murād would have no right to share it with him; but Riḍā should pay the regular price of that work. Murād was entitled to pay all travel and other shared costs (such as food and accommodation), till there became profits to pay the employees; but any kind of other personal costs (such as clothes, medicine and tobacco) should be paid independently. Neither of the two parties would have the right to dissolve this joint venture without their communal acceptance. If Riḍā dissolved the partnership, Murād would have the right of reclaiming half of the shared costs and other losses, let alone what he took as loans. But if Murād dissolved it, he would have no right to demand Riḍā to give any costs or losses back, and the latter would have the right to reclaim whatever costs or losses he makes. In case of Murād’s financial disability to cover the costs or due failure, neither of the two parties would have the right to reclaim any money, nor sue the other. Any losses should be shared between both parties.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Riḍā always introduced Murād in *al-Manār* as the manager of the journal and he was nowhere mentioned as an associate. See for example, his death announcement of Murād’s mother, 2/32 (1899), p. 511. In May 1900, he made an announcement to the readers of *al-Manār* that Murād was dismissed from his job at the journal, and he should not be consulted in publishing matters anymore, *al-Manār*, 3/9 (1900), p. 214. Under the section of ‘News and Opinions’ of the following issue, he regrettably maintained his frustration in Murād’s behavior

It is noticeable that Riḍā gives no mention to the contract he made with Murād in his reports of the financial situation of the journal. In the *Tārīḥ*, Riḍā mentioned some details about the funding of his project. He asserted that he never asked anybody for financial aid except after this burglary incident, when he as a result of his master's suggestion borrowed 50 pounds from a certain Muḥammad al-Wakīl in 1900 for the renewal of his work, and was not able to pay them back before 1903. He argued that his relation and constant praise of 'Abduh in the early issues of his journal was also one of the main reasons for his financial troubles, as the Palace due to its anti-'Abduh stance had attempted to "resist [its publication] and induce scholars, the National Party and other high civil servants to boycott *al-Manār*."⁴¹ Riḍā's statement was a reply to those who alleged that his close relation with 'Abduh was based on his personal financial interest.

Refuting all claims that he exploited 'Abduh's relations to collect his wealth, Riḍā argued that he was well-off enough and was even in no need to sell his own piece of land in his village before his departure. He added that his savings, which he collected in Syria as a result of his job as a notary clerk in his hometown, were enough to cover the expenses of his trip and also to start his printing project. After his arrival in Egypt, he also rejected an offer made by the Lebanese journalist Bišāra Taqlā, *al-Abrām*'s editor-in-chief, to write articles for his paper in return for a sum of money in order to save his full energy to establish a journal.⁴²

Early Months in Egypt

In his diary (late 1897-early 1898) Riḍā gives details of his early month in Egypt. On writing 'Abduh's biography more than twenty years later, Riḍā

as executive manager of *al-Manār*. He repeatedly claimed that it was his 'sympathy' to Murād's family situation which led him to keep him in his job; but this good treatment made the latter aspire to link his name with *al-Manār*'s reputation. According to Riḍā, Murād seized the opportunity of his travel to Ṭanṭā, and embezzled many copies of *al-Manār* and never showed up, *al-Manār*, 3/10 (1900), p. 238. Riḍā filed a lawsuit against him in 'Abdīn Court in Cairo. On 23 July of the same year, the judge of the court Muḥammad 'Iffat issued his verdict in absentia against Murād and his wife Umm Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn of returning all the embezzled issues or to pay back the value of 50 Egyptian pounds, and other costs including the lawyer's fees, *al-Manār*, 3/16 (1900), p. 383. Murād later left Egypt to occupy a new position at the municipality of Beirut, *al-Manār*, 12/1 (1909), p. 4. Later in 1927, Riḍā commended Murād's co-published Muslim journal titled *al-Ta'maddun al-Islāmī* (Islamic Civilization) in Tripoli, see *al-Manār*, 28/1 (1927), p. 80.

⁴¹ R. Riḍā (ed.), *Tārīḥ al-Ustād al-Imām*, Cairo, Dār al-faḍīla, 2003 [first edition], p. 1008.

⁴² *Tārīḥ*..., p. 1008.

merged some of the information mentioned in the diary in his chapter on his relation with his 'Abduh. After Riḍā's death, the Syrian journalist and linguist 'Abd al-Qādir al-Mağribī (1867-1956) published one of Riḍā's early letters in the Egyptian weekly *al-Risāla* (The Message), which also contained information about his early days in the country.⁴³ Due to the limitation of the paper, I will only focus on his primary efforts related to strengthening and guaranteeing success of his journal, substantiating his information with 'Abduh's *Tārīḥ* and Mağribī's letter in order to get a rather complete picture about his primary effort to enhance his printing project.

According to the diary, Riḍā arrived in Alexandria on Friday 8 Rajab 1315/ 3 December 1897 on an Austrian ship with his travel-fellow Faraḥ Anṭūn. He was impressed by the city, its lights, buildings, gardens and cafes. The next day he visited the school of *al-'Urwa l-wuṭqā* Association, headed by 'Abd al-Qādir Afandī Sirrī. It was an elementary school where children could learn Arabic, theology, *ḥanafī* jurisprudence, arithmetic, geography and history. About two hundred male and female students were enrolled in that school, and were also taught works written by the Egyptian 'Alī Mubārak (1824-1893). Riḍā directly started to make acquaintance with the journalistic atmosphere in the city. On Sunday in the afternoon he visited the printing house of the daily paper *Lisān al-'Arab* (The language of the Arabs) under the joint editorship of the two Christian brothers Nağīb al-Ḥaddād and Amīn al-Ḥaddād and the Muslim 'Abduh Badrān.⁴⁴ Later he met and talked with Antonios 'Abduh, one of *al-Ahrām*'s editors, about the state of journalism in the country. He was surprised to be informed that *al-Ahrām* ranked second in terms of circulation after the daily *al-Mu'ayyad* of Sheikh 'Alī Yūsuf (1863-1913), and not *al-Muqaṭṭam* as he had thought before. Antonios also informed him that *al-Ahrām* was published in 3000 copies of its daily edition and had around 1000 subscribers abroad, but *al-Muqaṭṭam* was only printed in 2000 copies, but *al-Mu'ayyad* was printed in 5000. He also added to him that besides their good payment for employees, *al-Ahrām* printing house was run with steam power and was considered the biggest and best press for publishing journals in Egypt.

Riḍā made a tour around Northern towns of Egypt in order to get more familiar with the cultural, religious and intellectual atmosphere of the country. A couple of days later, he left Alexandria for Ṭanṭā (the capital of al-Ġarbiyya province—the Egyptian Delta). Upon arrival, he visited the mosque of al-Sayyid al-Badawī. During his stay in Ṭanṭā, he was hosted by Sayyid

⁴³ *Al-Risāla*, 3/114 (1935), p. 1452-1455.

⁴⁴ See, Hartmann, *Arabic Press...*, p. 26 and p. 56.

Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Raḥīm, the sheikh of the Šāḍiliyya Qāwuqḡiyya Ṭarīqa,⁴⁵ who notified Riḍā that his would-be journal was not to circulate easily in Egypt, especially among the notables. But to get introduced to them would probably make them acquainted with the tendency of the journal before any publication. He stressed that there appeared many newspapers in Egypt, which in the beginning defended the nationalist cause, and then later they would change their ideas. According to him, the Egyptians strongly believed that any Syrian migrating to Egypt with the intention of establishing a journal would excessively praise Abū l-Hudā l-Šayyādī (1850–1909), the sultan’s Syrian advisor; and disseminate his ideas on its pages.⁴⁶ He also warned Riḍā that without flattering Abū l-Hudā, his potential journal would not be easily accessible to readers in the Sultanate.

Riḍā left for al-Manšūra, another town in Northern Egypt. On the train, he met with some of al-Azhar students on their way back from Cairo to their hometowns. He started to discuss with them the new reform regulations of their institution, and the significance of reading geography and other modern arts. Having known of Riḍā’s plan of initiating a journal, one of the students asked Riḍā if it was possible to appoint the latter’s brother as agent for his journal in the province. Riḍā visited ‘Abd al-Rāziq Afandī al-Rāfi‘ī, the *šar‘ī* judge of the town, in his house, where he made acquaintance with some local religious leaders, such as Sheikh ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Salamantī, the mufti of al-Manšūra.

After his three-day stay in al-Manšūra, Riḍā left for the Mediterranean city Damiette, where he met for the first time with the later well-known Muslim fervent propagandist and Egyptian nationalist Muḥammad Farīd Waḡdī (circa 1878–1954).⁴⁷ His father Muṣṭafā Waḡdī was the then deputy of Damiette Governorate. As a young boy, Waḡdī wrote his first work titled: *al-Falsafa l-ḥaqqā* (or the True Philosophy), which was not welcomed by the inhabitants of Damiette. Riḍā described him as “a zealous and fervent young man for the

⁴⁵ The *ṭarīqa* was founded by Sheikh Abū l-Maḥāsīn Muḥammad al-Qāwuqḡī of Tripoli (1809–1887). In his early educational stages, Riḍā attended some of Qāwuqḡī’s *ḥadīṭ* lessons, and was delivered his *iğāza* in *Dalā’il al-ḥayrāt*. Although he admired his teacher’s state of Sufism, Riḍā did not agree all the time on his views. See, *al-Manār*, 14/4 (1911), p. 425. About Sheikh Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Raḥīm’s, see, Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen, *Histoire d’un pèlerinage légendaire en islam. Le mouled de Tāntā*, Paris, Aubier, 2004, p. 159–160.

⁴⁶ About his life, see, Thomas Eich, *Abū l-Hudā al-Šayyādī: Eine Studie zu den sufischen Netzwerken und den genealogischen Kontroversen im spätoomanischen Reich*, Berlin, 2003; *id.*, “The Forgotten Salafī—Abū l-Hudā al-Šayyādī”, *Die Welt des Islams*, 43/1 (2003), p. 61–87; Julia Gonnella, *Islamische Heiligenverehrung im urbanen Kontext am Beispiel von Aleppo (Syrien)*, Berlin, Klaus Schwarz, 1995.

⁴⁷ About his life and works, see, Muḥammad Ṭaha l-Haḡīrī, *Muḥammad Farid Waḡdī: ḥayātuhu wa-āṭaruhu*. Cairo, The Arab League, 1970.

umma and the religion.” He informed Riḍā that he was writing a French book in which he would try to demonstrate the “privileges” of Islam.⁴⁸ In 1898, Waḡdī published his famous book *Taṭbīq al-diyāna l-islāmiyya ‘alā nawāmīs al-madaniyya* (Applying the Islamic Religion to the Norms of Civilization),⁴⁹ and Riḍā signified its scholarly quality as to come in the second place after Muḥammad ‘Abduh’s *Risālat al-Tawḥīd*.⁵⁰

After his return to Cairo, Riḍā went immediately to meet Muḥammad ‘Abduh in his house situated in ‘Ayn Šams on 19 December 1897. During their first meeting, Riḍā discussed with ‘Abduh the issue of reforming al-Azhar and the rigidity of its *šuyūḥ*. In their early consequent meetings, they discussed various religious, social and political matters, but did not talk about his journalistic plan. He told ‘Abduh about his plan for the first time during their fourth meeting on 13 December, but ‘Abduh was already informed by the *wālī* (governor) of Beirut that Riḍā’s purpose of establishing a journal in Egypt was to attack government agencies. In his reply, Riḍā stressed that his initiative was greater than talking about persons. In the beginning ‘Abduh was not very enthusiastic about the idea, and warned Riḍā against failure to get a great deal of subscribers for his journal. He also discouraged him by elucidating that the Egyptians paid no attention to literary, educational or scholarly developments; and they were only interested in their national news about the government and its policy, which they could easily get from the dailies, *al-Muqaṭṭam*, *al-Mu‘ayyad* and *al-Ahrām*. He also added that the majority of al-Azhar or high school students were not engaged into literature or language. To ‘Abduh, editors of many Egyptian journals exaggerate the number of their subscribers and count each name registered in their administration with no regard whether he already paid his subscription or not. He did not believe Riḍā, for example, when he reported to him that subscribers of *al-Hilāl* surmounted to 3500 persons.

Riḍā maintained that his intention was to practice writing on significant and useful themes. ‘Abduh, on the other hand, advised him to publish books instead, if he aimed at reaching a big number of readers. Riḍā insistently replied that he was ready to cover the costs of the journal, and did not expect any profit for the first two years. ‘Abduh became later convinced with the project. He chose the name *al-Manār* among other titles suggested by Riḍā.⁵¹ The usage of the name *al-Manār* was quoted from the prophetic *ḥadīṭ*

⁴⁸ Al-Hāḡirī, *Waḡdī*..., p. 31-32.

⁴⁹ Cairo, 1898.

⁵⁰ *Al-Manār*, 2/7 (1899), p. 109-110.

⁵¹ *Tārīḥ*..., p. 1005.

indicating that Islam in its role in one's life represents a "lighthouse" or a "beacon" for human guidance.⁵²

In an early meeting, Riḍā earnestly explained to 'Abduh the need for publishing a modern commentary on the Qur'ān. In the beginning 'Abduh was not convinced that another commentary was necessary; but he finally yielded so far as to begin a series of lectures on the Qur'ān in al-Azhar University. Riḍā attended these lectures and took notes, which he afterwards revised and enlarged. The result was shown to 'Abduh who approved, or corrected as necessary. These lectures began to appear in *al-Manār* as early as 1900.⁵³ Other items included in the journal later were proposed in order to serve the editor's purpose of promoting social, religious, and economic reforms; to prove the suitability of Islam as a religious system under the present conditions and the compatibility of the Divine Law as an instrument by the government; to remove superstitions that do not belong to Islam, etc. The editor devoted a special section for giving *fatwā*-s (religious legal advice) on matters sent to him by his readers.⁵⁴

In another meeting (6 January 1898), 'Abduh advised Riḍā that in order to guard his newly born project the journal should not become a tool of any existing political party, nor should he write rejoinders against any newspaper. He also suggested to make use of the class of Egyptian notables for circulating the journal, but not to provide them with any support of giving them the journal as a platform for achieving their purposes. Although dealing with the Amīriyya Press, the state-owned Press, was more expensive than any other place, 'Abduh proposed that he had to make use of it in publishing the journal in order to avoid any intrigues by giving owners of other printing houses access to the journal's internal affairs. The reason for its high charge was the fees of their editing work. Therefore, he proposed to negotiate with them on the price and not to utilize their editing. 'Abduh also added to Riḍā that he should be careful in dealing with the owners of presses in Egypt. He considered Christian Syrians as "untrustworthy whose hearts were filled with animosity against Islam, and they came [to Egypt] for retaliation (*taṣaffi*)."⁵⁵ The Egyptian Muslims were, in his view, "more corrupted than the Christian Syrians."⁵⁶ 'Abduh also believed that total freedom of speech in Egypt was not

⁵² The *ḥadīth* "إن للإسلام صوي ومناراً كمنار الطريق" (Just as the road Islam has its beacon and lighthouse) was related by al-Hākim on the authority of Abū Hurayra. See, *al-Manār*, 10/8 (1907), p. 628.

⁵³ Charles C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*, London, 1933, p. 198-199.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 181-182.

⁵⁵ *Diary*, 1898.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

totally granted to Muslims. In the *Tārīḥ*, Riḍā omitted this last part of 'Abduh's sharp critique of Christian and Muslim publishers in Egypt.

However, Riḍā did not manage to print his journal in al-Amīriyya Press, and tried to gather information about other places. According to the *Tārīḥ*, he finally decided upon agreeing with the Coptic al-Tawfīq Press.⁵⁷ In his tribute of Sheikh 'Alī Yūsuf in 1913, Riḍā maintained that he printed his journal during the first two years in al-Mu'ayyad Press.⁵⁸ In order to facilitate his job, 'Abduh wrote Riḍā a letter of introduction (14 March 1898) addressed to Niqūlā Afandī Šihāda, the founder of *al-Rā'id al-miṣrī* newspaper (firstly published 1897), requesting him to give the latter the names of prominent subscribers in his journal.⁵⁹

It was also of major importance for Riḍā to make acquaintance with the already existing Egyptian journals and printing houses. Earlier on 21 December he met with his travel-fellow and later founder of *al-Ġāmi'a* magazine Farah Anṭūn, who accompanied him to the well-known journal and press *al-Muqataṭaf* of the Arab journalist Ya'qūb Ṣarrūf.⁶⁰ Ṣarrūf had already heard about Riḍā's coming to Egypt from Ğurġi Zaydān, the founder of *al-Hilāl*. Riḍā told Ṣarrūf that his main intention to establish a journal was religious reform and reconciliation between Islam and Christianity. In their discussion, Ṣarrūf explained to Riḍā the difference between Syria and Egypt. He attributed the spread of knowledge and reform in the Syrian territory to the consciousness of its people, but in Egypt it was thanks to the efforts of the government. As Ṣarrūf was greatly interested in philosophy, Riḍā made it clear that his intended journal was besides an attempt to remove the "illusion" in the minds of the majority of Muslims that philosophy contradicts their religion.⁶¹

Again accompanied by Anṭūn, Riḍā visited Ğurġi Zaydān in his office, where he learnt more about the state of journals, their subscription and propagation in the country. On 5 January 1898 he visited Sheikh 'Alī Yūsuf in al-Mu'ayyad Press in order to further discuss technical matters about his plan. The next day, he went to the Ḥidīwiyya Bookstore looking through their recent publications of *Baḥr al-ansāb* by the Iraquo-Persian *imāmī* genealogist Ibn 'Inaba (1347-1424), and the book of *al-Durar al-kāfiya* of the Egyptian

⁵⁷ *Tārīḥ*..., p. 1003-1004.

⁵⁸ *Al-Manār*, 16/12 (1913), p. 951.

⁵⁹ The text of the letter, written in Riḍā's diary in 'Abduh's handwriting, was republished in *Tārīḥ*..., p. 1004. It is also cited by Hamzah, "*Ālim*...", p. 5.

⁶⁰ About *al-Muqataṭaf*, see, Dagmar Glass, *Der Muqataṭaf und seine Öffentlichkeit*, Würzburg, Ergon Verlag, 2004, 2 vols. About *al-Manār*'s position among other contemporary magazines, see, p. 159-164.

⁶¹ *Diary*, 1898.

ḥadīṭ scholar Ibn Ḥaḡar al-ʿAsqalānī (1372-1449), but he was not impressed about their edition, because of their bad quality.

Early Circulation of the Journal

About four months after his arrival, Riḍā commenced upon the publication of the first issue of *al-Manār* (mid-March, 1898), which he wrote at the mosque of Al-Ismāʿīlī on the same street nearby ʿAbduh's house.⁶² The pages of each issue did not mostly exceed eight pages. By the end of the first year, Riḍā had decided to change the format at the request of his readers, who were interested in the issues being bound in one volume as is the case with other famous magazines.⁶³ During its early two years Riḍā's journal appeared as a weekly periodical. By the third year, it was published as a bi-monthly journal, and in later years as a monthly.⁶⁴

To precisely ascertain the international or national circulation and readership of any journal is difficult. One mostly depends on the subscriber lists or the author's reply to queries or correspondence with his readers. In the early years, *al-Manār* did not gain its expected wide circulation. The early issues saw light in about 1500 copies, which Riḍā sent to his acquaintances in Egypt and Syria. But the majority of his prospective Egyptian subscribers returned the journal back to him, and the Ḥamīdian government later banned *al-Manār* in the Ottoman regions. The reason why the Egyptians initially turned it down was probably that Riḍā as a Syrian immigrant was no such an eminent publicist, and still had no affiliation with any political or religious faction in Egypt. The eminent Egyptian poet and the nationalist minister Maḥmūd Sāmī l-Barūdī (1839-1904), however, used to translate passages of *al-Manār* to one of his English friends, who once told him: "Muslims would search for *al-Manār* and reprint it once again after fifty years."⁶⁵

By the end of the third year of its publication, the number of *al-Manār* subscribers did not exceed three or four hundred.⁶⁶ Up till 1902, Riḍā was also still complaining about the modest circulation of his journal. From al-Manṣūra and during his visit to the province to collect aids for the fire catastrophe in the town of Mīt Ġamr, ʿAbduh asked Riḍā to be patient, when

⁶² *Tārīḡ*..., p. 1005.

⁶³ *Al-Manār*, 1/49 (1899), p. 954.

⁶⁴ Aḥmad al-Šarabāsī, *Rašīd Riḍā*, Cairo, 1977, II, p. 23.

⁶⁵ *Al-Manār*, preface to the second edition of the first volume, p. 1.

⁶⁶ Adams, *Islam*..., p. 180.

he was encountered with the people's lack of interest in his journal.⁶⁷ But *al-Manār* started to gain its reputation and had its rapid increase of circulation by the fifth year of appearance (1903), especially that Riḍā had published a series of articles by Muḥammad 'Abduh in his defense of Islam against Christianity in the field of knowledge and civilization.⁶⁸ The publisher managed to sell the first issues of his first year at a fourfolded price, and reprinted them by the tenth year (1907). Riḍā managed to reach subscribers (individuals and institutions) in Russia, Tunisia, India, Sudan, Sierra Leon, Bosnia, China, and America.⁶⁹

'Abduh's assistance played a great role in the early distribution of the journal as well. Riḍā used to bring him copies of each issue to show the journal to his friends and visitors.⁷⁰ According to Riḍā, 'Abduh's constant praise endowed *al-Manār* with "acceptance and respect from the highest social classes in Egypt."⁷¹ The citation of *al-Manār* in other contemporary works had also contributed to give *al-Manār* celebrity among the Egyptian audiences. For instance, when the Egyptian jurist Aḥmad Faṭḥī Zaḡlūl (1863-1914) published his Arabic translation of *L'islam: impressions et études*,⁷² by Henry de Castries (1850-1927), he cited *al-Manār's* views on the question of the human will and belief. A group of notable jurists and lawyers became subscribers of his journal as a result of their reading of Zaḡlūl's citation and appraisal of *al-Manār*.⁷³

As analyzed by Hamzah, Riḍā attempted to propagate his plan for religious reform among a wide average of readers, especially among government officials, westernized notables with non-Islamic education, fellow journalists, writers, political activists, 'ulamā', provisional notables and the literates of all walks of life.⁷⁴ However, jurists remained the most significant class of his subscribers to the journal, especially in the city of Ṭaṇṭā.⁷⁵

It is plausible to admit the difficulty of ascertaining the size of *al-Manār's* influence during its early years in Riḍā's native country. However, Riḍā tried to publicize his journal among religious reformers in his country of origin.

⁶⁷ *Tārīḥ*..., p. 1023.

⁶⁸ *Al-Islām wa-l-naṣrāniyya bayna l-'ilm wa-l-madaniyya* (Islam and Christianity between Science and Civilization), Cairo, al-Manār, 1902.

⁶⁹ Riḍā's list of subscribers in his diary, 1903. See also about one of his readers in Zanzibar, B. G. Martin, "Notes on Some Members of the Learned Classes of Zanzibar and East Africa in the Nineteenth Century", *African Historical Studies*, 4/3 (1971), p. 536.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1006.

⁷¹ Ibady, *Journals*..., p. 111.

⁷² Paris, Colin, 1896.

⁷³ *Tārīḥ*..., p. 1006-1007.

⁷⁴ *Tārīḥ*..., as cited in Hamzah, "*Ālim*...", p. 4-5.

⁷⁵ *Tārīḥ*..., p. 1006-1007.

Ottoman authorities made more than one attempt to intercept and confiscate the journal in Syria. In the first place, Riḍā's harsh criticism of popular Sufism and his constant admiration of Ḡamāl al-Dīn al-Afḡānī triggered controversy with Abū l-Hudā l-Ṣayyādī, who was a target for criticism by many religious reformers. In one of his early issues, Riḍā attacked the Rifā'iyya and Qādiriyya orders as having incorporated forbidden innovations (*bida'*) into their ceremonies. He cited two of Ṣayyādī's publications that defended their customs of snake-eating, inserting needles in one's body and walking on hot coals.⁷⁶ The problem escalated with al-Ṣayyādī when Riḍā published a full review of al-Kawākibī's famous essay, *Characteristics of Tyranny* (*Ṭabā'ī' al-istibdād*) in 1901.⁷⁷ According to Hourani, Kawākibī's attack on the sultan and popular religion stemmed from personal feuds between the latter's family and Ṣayyādī for religious influence in Aleppo.⁷⁸ Riḍā was harshly attacked by the journal *Tripoli*, edited by his former Sheikh Ḥusayn al-Ġisr, due to his criticism of the Qādiri and Rifā'i sufi orders in the first issues.⁷⁹

In March 1898, Riḍā received a letter from Tripoli that the governor of Beirut had issued his decision to confiscate the second issue of *al-Manār*. Riḍā was surprised because this specific issue did not include any anti-government statements. It only contained didactic articles on the significance of motivating national enterprises and rich classes to make donations for establishing educational institutions. On the other hand, he contended that his *Manār* attracted many Syrian readers, who regularly sent him messages of eulogy and interest in receiving its issues. Riḍā did not object to the idea of censoring the press, despite its disturbance of freedom, but he was skeptical about the capability of those in charge of this job, advising the government to appoint trustworthy people to such positions.⁸⁰

Again in July of the same year, his Syrian readers complained about the banning of *al-Manār*. His agents in Syria had also informed him that the readers, as they received no issues anymore, also discontinued paying their subscription. Riḍā showed his disappointment that he was a "sincere servant" of the Caliph and his state, and his journal did not deal with any political issues. He moreover requested the post office to return the issues to his address as long as they would not reach the people.⁸¹

⁷⁶ Commins, "al-Manār...", p. 7.

⁷⁷ 4/3 (1901), p. 105-106.

⁷⁸ As quoted by Commins, "al-Manār...", p. 6.

⁷⁹ *Al-Manār*, 1/33 (1898), p. 647; 2/3, p. 39; 2/4, p. 51.

⁸⁰ "*Al-Manār fī Bilād al-Šām (al-Manār in Syria)*", *al-Manār*, 1/5 (1898), p. 88; see the eulogy of the Syrian Sufi Sheikh Rašid al-Miqāṭi, 1/21 (1898), p. 399, and the Ottoman text of another letter by one of his readers in Istanbul, 1/23 (1898), p. 453-55.

⁸¹ "*Al-Manār fī Sūryā*", *al-Manār*, 1/17 (1898), p. 312.

Officials frequently tore down and destroyed *al-Manār* issues on purpose. In August another Syrian subscriber informed Riḍā that the last issue of the journal remained at the censorship office for more than five days so that they would—as he cynically indicated—examine it in “a microscopic way.” He accused censors in Damascus and Beirut of abuse of office. According to the subscriber, many people in Syria had abandoned the Ottoman post services sending their things through foreign mail in order to avoid the loss of their published materials.⁸²

Syrian authorities also harassed Riḍā's family members. Due to *al-Manār*'s criticism of the Rifā'i order, al-Ṣayyādī requested Badrī Bāšā, his brother-in-law and the governor of Tripoli, to hand Riḍā's brothers to military authorities, although they were exempted from the service on the basis of their studentship. They also beat one of his brothers on his way from Tripoli to al-Qalamūn at night and stole their horse; and they also attempted to confiscate their family mosque in the village. Riḍā further asserted that Ṣayyādī was planning to assassinate him through one of his people in Egypt.⁸³

As early as December 1898, the Syro-Lebanese emigrant community in Brazil knew about *al-Manār*. The Sao Paulo-based journal *al-Aṣma'ī*, co-edited by the Christians Ḥalīl Milūk and Šukrī l-Ḥūrī, reviewed *al-Manār* describing it as “one of the best Islamic journals.”⁸⁴ Na'ūm al-Labakī (d. 1924), the founder of the Syrian journal *al-Munāẓir* (The Debater) in Sao Paulo,⁸⁵ blamed Riḍā for restricting the subjects of his journal to religious issues, and that he stopped his discussions on Syrian national problems and religious strife in their homeland Syria. The contents of the journal, according to him, were not in agreement with the subtitle of his journal: “scientific, literary, informative and educating journal.” In his reply, Riḍā explained that he used to write such items before the banning of his journal in Syria, and they would have been valueless as no Syrian Muslim, Christian or Jew had access anymore to his articles. As the circle of his readers became limited to people in Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, India, Java, and a group of Syrian emigrants in America, it was more appropriate for him to deal mostly with other Islamic religious instructive issues. Riḍā was also convinced that his treatment of such Islamic themes was not only of benefit for his Muslim

⁸² “*Murāqibū l-ḡarā'id fi Sūryā* (Censors of Newspapers in Syria)”, *al-Manār*, 1/20 (1898), p. 380; cf. 1/23 (1898), p. 436; cf., Eich, *Abū l-Hudā...*, p. 108-109.

⁸³ *Al-Manār*, 2/15 (1899), p. 235; see Ṣayyādī's letters addressed to Riḍā, 12/1/ (1909), p. 1.

⁸⁴ “*Al-Manār fi l-Brazīl* (*al-Manār* in Brazil)”, *al-Manār*, 1/37 (1898), p. 734.

⁸⁵ “*Al-Manār wa-l-Munāẓir*”, *al-Manār*, 2/40 (1899), p. 683. In 1908 Labakī returned back to Beirut (his birthplace), where he continued its publication. He was the president of the Representative Council of Lebanon. See, *al-A'lām*, vol. 8, p. 40.

readers, but for Christians as well. He asserted that a Christian teacher at one of the high schools in Syria after having read *al-Manār* demanded Riḍā to send him all previous issues, after having persuaded the director of the school to subscribe to the journal and collect them in the school's library. He finally concluded that it was also reasonable to subtitle his journal as "informative and educating", since religious sciences are the most "venerated" fields.

After having won subscribers in various regions, Riḍā frequently complained about many overdue subscriptions. He classified Russian readers as the most honest in paying their subscription on due time. The worst among his readers were Indian Muslims, followed by the people of the Maghreb and Algeria. Tunisian readers occupied a moderate place in his classification. With regard to Egypt there were unparalleled examples of "truthful" and "generous" people, but there were many others who "procrastinated" and "deceived" him. Again with regard to their profession, engineers were the most honest, while the worst were unemployed and official scribes of divans. Out of his experience, judiciary and religious scholars often delayed their payment.⁸⁶

Riḍā's Perspective on Printing

Riḍā was a great advocate of the role of printing press in reforming religion and society. In the first issue of his journal, he spoke of "a loud voice in plain Arabic crying to wake up the Orientals: around them, a new world was taking shape and spreading all over the surface of the earth, nature was being conquered and work was being done."⁸⁷

In his mind, the press has three major functions: *ta'lim*, *ḥaṭāba* and *iḥtisāb*: to teach, to preach and to promote good and forbid evil.⁸⁸ Riḍā, himself a *ḥaṭīb* (preacher), made his journal a "podium" through which he believed to convey religious message to the Muslim public. Riḍā many times gave more publicity to his sermons and lectures by publishing them in his journal. In other places he also quoted sermons of other Muslim preachers.⁸⁹

The press must also serve all members of the *umma* by "drawing the map of the country they have to traverse, showing them its roads, passes and sources."⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Šarabāsī, *Rašīd Riḍā*, p. 46.

⁸⁷ *Al-Manār*, 1/1 (1898), p. 1; as quoted in Skovgaard-Petersen, *Defining Islam...*, p. 70.

⁸⁸ Skovgaard-Petersen, *Defining Islam...*, p. 70-72.

⁸⁹ See, *al-Manār*, 6/17 (1903), p. 669; 28/2 (1927). p. 150.

⁹⁰ "*Al-Ġarā'id: waṣā'if aṣḥābihā, ḥālūhā fī l-Šarq wa-l-Ġarb* (Newspapers: Functions of their founders, their stauts in the East and the West)," *al-Manār*, 1/34 (1898), p. 655-61; cf. Skovgaard-Petersen, *Defining Islam...*, p. 69-70.

It links all classes in the society: politicians, governors, judges, scientists, merchants, artisans, peasants, etc. Journalists might demonstrate the hidden reality of specific cases or events for judges and rulers, or accompany the army in its military expeditions and play a role of espionage upon their enemies. It should also function as a guide for teachers in their didactic methods by showing them modern discoveries and new critical scientific approaches. It is "the most honorable industry and the best work." As compared to the derogatory status of the press in the Arab world, he stressed that Europeans, as they recognized the importance of its task in promoting the society, established specialized journals in all fields of knowledge. He also esteemed the idea in the west of creating new institutes for training journalists.⁹¹

As compared to the situation in his homeland Syria, Riḍā attributed the progress of the Egyptian press to two reasons. First of all, the pressure practiced by Syrian authorities on printing dissuaded honest writers from being involved in journalism. One should first bribe the officials in order to get permission. Secondly, lack of freedom and strict censorship had obliged many qualified journalists and publishers to quit the idea of establishing a journal altogether. On the other hand, excessive liberty in Egypt had its disadvantage. He proposed that the Egyptian government should introduce a new set of laws in Egypt in order to regulate the trade, and prevent attacking people, gossiping, disseminating "decadent" ideas and "immoral" words.⁹²

Again in August 1899, Riḍā criticized the contributions by new weekly journals in Egypt to religious matters without having the appropriate eligible knowledge. For him, the government had left journalism and printing regulations in chaos. His focal point of criticism was that essayists would not often cite prophetic traditions properly, nor did they give them any authentication. This had opened the door to the circulation of many false religious ideas among the Muslim public. Another significant point was the abundant mention of Qur'ānic verses in printed leaflets liable to abuse or ill-treatment by readers (*ibtidāl wa-mtihān*). He himself remained very cautious in frequently quoting Qur'ānic passages in the early issues of his printed journal, although he knew well that the majority of his readers used to collect these issues to bind them in one volume.⁹³ However he meanwhile considered printing the Qur'ān and its *tafsīr* (commentary) works as an obligatory task for Muslims. "Printing," Riḍā said, "is the craft through which one could convey words correctly. And to convey the word of God is a religious duty".⁹⁴

⁹¹ *Al-Manār*, 1/34 (1898), p. 659.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Al-Manār*, 2/23 (1899), p. 365.

⁹⁴ *Al-Manār*, 34/2 (1934), p. 114-117.

Riḍā praised the public security and freedom of the press as the biggest “favour” introduced by colonial authorities in Egypt. He was astonished that the same people who enjoyed this right were the ones who demanded the government to put restriction on its absolute freedom. The Egyptians turned journalism into affronting or showing others’ faults instead of being in the service of their land. Riḍā compared this freedom to the air, vital for life, but it would be turned into a source of annoyance if it passed by a “carcass” and reached a group of people. Instead of removing the air, one should rather get rid of the carcass.⁹⁵

He bemoaned the state of printing in the Muslim world. Cultural stagnancy and intellectual development of any nation relatively depend on the religious scholarly quality of their circulated printed works, which do not contain any elements of significant use in the society as regard to ethics, literatures and conduct. According to him, the style of books dealing with pedagogic issues was difficult to understand, and those written for public reading were full of “superstitions and illusions that spoil reason, ethics and religion.”⁹⁶ As compared to the early classical era of Arabic books, publicists of his time became more involved into writing on “illicit” and “irrational” subjects, while valuable Arabic works were kept in European libraries in Paris, London and Leiden.⁹⁷

Riḍā furthermore suggested that Muslims became in need of printing uncomplicated and abridged books on matters of language, religion, ethics, history and other fields of arts that might help in the upbringing of the young generation. Authors of such works should put in mind the variance of ages and thoughts of their readers and depend on new successful pedagogic methods. Secondly, there should be easy books available within the reach of the public on religious themes and anecdotes, and those other subjects dealing with famous tales of early “righteous” Muslims.

After five years of experience in printing, Riḍā advocated the idea of reforming the letter format of Arabic printers.⁹⁸ Unlike the format of detached Latin (*ifranġi*) letters, the layout of Arabic letters consumes less paper; but the big space of various forms represents a disadvantage for Arabic printing. The letterforms in Būlāq Press for instance exceeded nine hundred. In order to improve the Amīriyya Press, the Ministry of Finance demanded the forming of a committee to investigate ways of reform, headed by Sheikh

⁹⁵ “*Ḥurriyat al-ġarā'id wa-l-šū'ūr bi-l-faḍīla fī Miṣr* (Freedom of Press and Feeling Values in Egypt),” *al-Manār*, 5/1 (1902), p. 38-39.

⁹⁶ “*Al-Kutub al-'arabiyya wa-l-iṣlāḥ* (Arabic Books and Reform),” *al-Manār*, 3/3 (1900), p. 49-53.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Al-Manār*, 5/24 (1903), p. 954.

Ḥamza Faṭḥ Allāh, an inspector at the Ministry of Education. The committee concluded that it was significant to follow European presses, such as Oxford (282 symbols) in economizing the amount of letters to 178 including some numbers and foreign symbols used in oriental languages. The committee also recommended improving the line design, reducing the number of printing instruments, and economizing their budget, time, geometric and employees. The Ministry, as a result, appropriated eight thousand pounds for this reform plan. Riḍā agreed on some of the points, but the reduction of symbols would badly affect the beauty of calligraphy. He suggested that it would have been a better solution, if the plan had proposed preserving some of the omitted symbols to be used in titles, visiting cards or invitations.

Conclusion

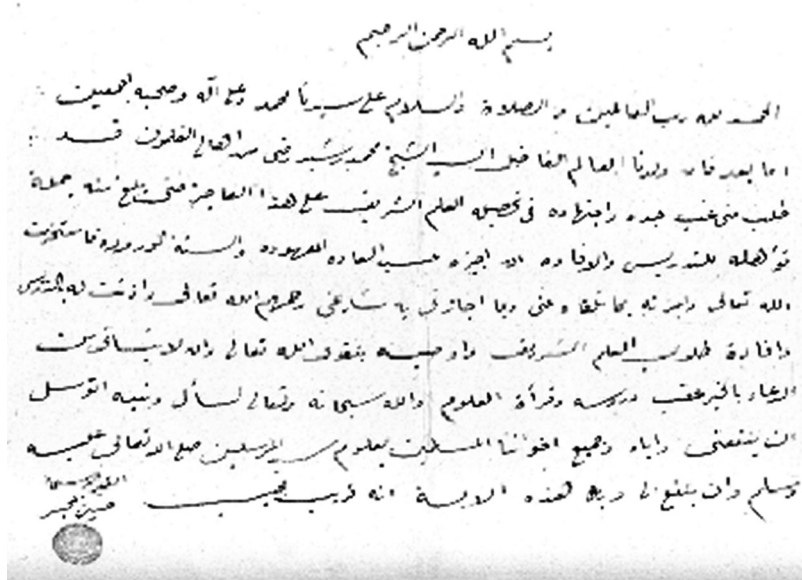
We have studied the social setting in which Riḍā's voluminous work has arisen. Besides his position as a leading *salafī* scholar, he succeeded through *al-Manār* to establish himself amongst other Syrians who made Egypt their new residence. Riḍā's archive has been very useful in adding new information about Riḍā's initial religious activities in Egypt as recorded in his diaries. We now know more about the early financial sources of *al-Manār* through the existing agreement which he settled with his fellow-citizen 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Effendī Murād. But the question why did Riḍā always introduce Murād in the journal as the manager of the journal and he was nowhere mentioned as an associate is not clear.

Al-Manār is not only depicted as a rich mine of information for the situation of the Muslim World during the early twentieth century, it also represented one of the newest and most significant printed platforms for Muslim writers to disseminate their reflections and knowledge on a wide range of religious matters, such as theology, law, historiography, Qur'anic exegesis, etc. Its primary impact by the turn of the 19th century was meager, but it later enjoyed, besides a local or national circulation within Egypt, a dissemination that was nearly worldwide. For more than three decades, Riḍā above all made use of his print-medium to propagate his own religious and political ideas and to document his own life.

One ventures to argue that *al-Manār* would best provide a typical model of how this new craft of printing in religious ideas worked. Riḍā mostly produced the majority of the materials embodied in the journal, but it was also still a good podium for many contributors among outstanding Egyptian and Arab men of letters. Around his journal, he, in addition, managed to consti-



Ridā's *Ijāzah* in hadīth delivered by Sheikh Mahmūd Nashshābah (1813-1890)



His *Ijāzah* delivered by Sheikh Hussein al-Jisr (1845-1909)



Riḍā standing as a young boy in his hometown Tripoli beside his elder brother



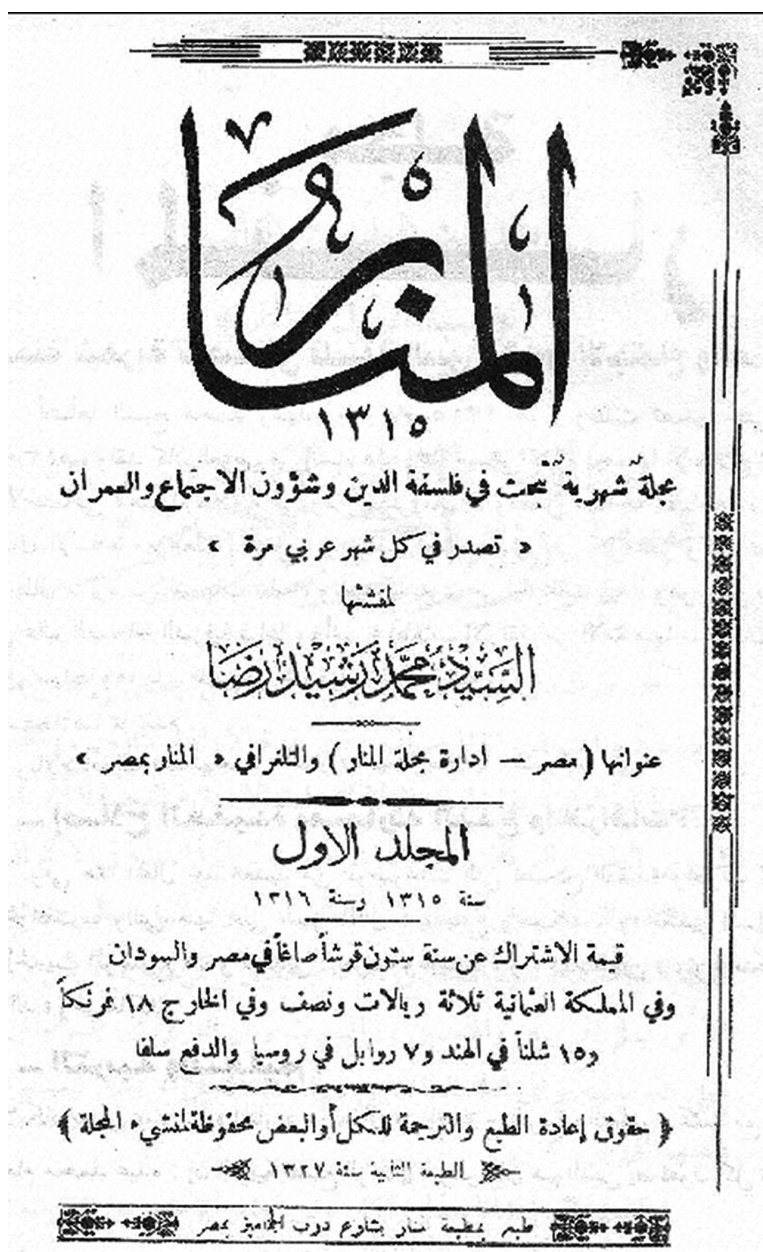
Riḍā after his migration to Egypt



Al-Manār Press from within in 1926



Al-Manār Doorplate



tute a worldwide network of affiliations and a broad circle of publicists, who adamantly adopted the back-to-religion trend of his time.

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